

In the Claims

Claims 1, 22, 24 have been rewritten herein. New claims 52-61 have been added. A complete set of claims, as amended, is provided below.

1. (amended) A method for tracking prescription orders through a pharmacy having a plurality of physically spaced apart locations for filling the prescription order, the plurality of spaced apart locations positioned along a workflow stream leading to a [will call] storage area for storing filled prescription orders therein, said method including the following steps:

receiving a prescription order at a first location upstream of the [will call] storage area;

tagging the prescription order with a remote tag that stays with the prescription order;

associating the remote tag with customer information associated with the prescription order upstream of the [will call] storage area;

manually moving the prescription order to a second location within the pharmacy upstream of the [will call] storage area;

automatically detecting the presence of the prescription order at the second location by sensing the remote tag attached to the order when said remote tag is in the proximity of said second location; and,

automatically recording the location of the prescription order at said second location.

2. (previously presented) The method for tracking prescription orders through a pharmacy of claim 1, further including the steps of:

displaying the location of the prescription order on a computer system display, thereby facilitating the easy location of said prescription order.

3. (previously presented) The method for tracking prescription orders through a pharmacy of claim 2, wherein said moving step includes moving said prescription order to at least three spaced apart locations within the pharmacy, and further including:

taking the prescription order at the first location;

storing the filled prescription order at a third location; and,

automatically detecting the presence of the prescription order at the third location by sensing the remote tag attached to the order when said remote tag is in the proximity of said third location.

4. (previously presented) The method for tracking prescription orders through a pharmacy of claim 1, further including the steps of:

automatically collecting timing information about the amount of time the prescription order remains at the second location;

storing said timing information into the computer system; and,

compiling workflow information based on the timing information.

5. (previously presented) The method for tracking prescription orders through a pharmacy of claim 4, further including the step of:

associating the workflow information with a particular worker to evaluate worker efficiency.

6. (previously presented) The method for tracking prescription order through a pharmacy of claim 5, wherein said pharmacy is a retail pharmacy.

7. (previously presented) The method for tracking prescription orders through a pharmacy of claim 3, wherein said compiling workflow information step includes:

automatically monitoring the amount of time said prescription order remains at said third location; and,

automatically signaling a pharmacy worker when the prescription order exceeds a predetermined amount of time at said third location.

8. (previously presented) The method for tracking prescription orders through a pharmacy of claim 4, wherein said workflow information step includes:

automatically detecting a first time associated with the prescription order being picked-up by a customer;

automatically determining if a new prescription order from that customer is a refill of the prescription order;

automatically determining a second time associated with the new prescription being presented to the pharmacy;

automatically comparing the difference between the first and second times with a predetermined amount to determine if the new prescription order has been prematurely submitted to the pharmacy; and,

automatically signaling a pharmacy worker if the new prescription order has been prematurely submitted.

9. (previously presented) A prescription order tracking system for use in a retail pharmacy having a first station therein for filling the prescription order, said first station positioned along a workflow stream leading to a storage device for storing filled prescription orders therein, said tracking system including:

a computer system having a display;

a tag operably secured to the prescription order; and

a first tag reader positioned near the first station and in communication with said computer system, said first tag reader able to automatically detect the presence of said tag when said tag is in close proximity of said first tag reader and send a first signal to said computer system;

wherein said computer system processes said signal to display the presence of said tag at said first station, thereby displaying the location of said prescription order.

10. (previously presented) The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, further including:

a second station spaced apart from said first station; and wherein said second station has a second tag reader positioned in communication with said computer system, said second tag reader able to automatically detect the presence of said tag when said tag is in close proximity of said second tag reader and send a second signal to said computer system;

wherein said computer system processes said first signal and said second signal to display the location of said tag at one of said first and second stations, thereby displaying the location of said prescription order.

11. (previously presented) The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, wherein said tag is a bar code, and said tag reader is a bar code scanner.

12. (previously presented) The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, wherein said tag reader locates said tag through electromagnetic interrogation of a spatial region.

13. (previously presented) The prescription order tracking system of claim 12, wherein said tag reader is an electromagnetic field generator, and said tag is an electromagnetic antenna.

14. (previously presented) The prescription order tracking system of claim 12, wherein said tag is a transmitter for transmitting a signal, and said tag reader is able to receive said signal.

15. (previously presented) The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, wherein said tag is detachably secured to said prescription order.

16. (previously presented) The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, wherein said tag is rigidly secured to said prescription order.

17. (previously presented) The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, wherein said tag is secured to a carrier for receiving the prescription order therein.

18. (previously presented) The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, wherein said storage device includes:

a storage bin having a plurality of cubbies, each said cubby having an individual identifier, and having a cubby tag reader in communication with said computer system, such that the presence of said tag within one of said plurality of cubbies is automatically detected by that cubby's tag reader and sends a cubby location signal to said computer system, said cubby location signal including the individual identifier of said one of said plurality of cubbies;

wherein said computer system process said first signal and said cubby location signal to display the location of said tag at one of said first location or said one of said plurality of cubbies.

19. (previously presented) The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, wherein said computer system monitors the time interval said tag remains at said first location and compiles workflow information based on said time interval.

20. (previously presented) The prescription order tracking system of claim 19, wherein said computer system correlates said workflow information with a particular worker to compile efficiency information on that worker.

21. (previously presented) The prescription order tracking system of claim 19, wherein said computer system monitors the amount of time said prescription order remains within a particular cubby and automatically signals when said time exceeds a predetermined amount, thereby allowing a pharmacy worker to restock said prescription order.

b1 22. (amended) The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, wherein said tag reader is rigidly secured ~~at~~[to] said first station.

23. (previously presented) The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, wherein said tag reader is hand-held.

24. (amended) A prescription order tracking system for use in a retail pharmacy having a first station therein for filling the prescription order, the first station positioned upstream of a [will call] storage device for storing filled prescription orders therein, said tracking system including:

a computer system having a display;

a tag operably secured to the prescription order upstream of the [will call] storage device, said computer system including customer identifying information for correlating said tag to said prescription order; and

a first tag reader positioned near the first station and in communication with said computer system, said first tag reader able to automatically detect the presence of said tag when said tag is in close proximity to said first tag reader and send a first signal to said computer system;

said [will call] storage device having a plurality of compartments, each said compartment having an identifier, and having a compartment tag reader in communication with said computer system, such that the presence of said tag within one of said plurality of compartments is automatically detected by that compartment's tag reader and sends a compartment location signal to said computer system, said compartment location signal including the identifier of said one of said plurality of compartments;

wherein said computer system processes said first signal and said compartment location signal to display the location of said tag at one of said first location or said one of said plurality of compartments.

25. (previously presented) The prescription order tracking system of claim 24, wherein said first station is a storage device positioned upstream of said [will call] storage device.

26. (previously presented) The prescription order tracking system of claim 24, further including a switching device in communication with said first tag detector, said compartment tag detector, and said computer system such that signal information is collected from said first and compartment tag detectors at predetermined intervals.

e! 27. (previously presented) The prescription order tracking system of claim 24, wherein:

said first tag reader is able to automatically detect when said tag is moved away from being in close proximity to said first tag reader and to send a second signal to said computer system.

28. (previously presented) The prescription order tracking system of claim 27, wherein said computer system monitors the time between receiving said first signal and said second signal to determine worker performance at the first station.

29. (previously presented) The prescription order tracking system of claim 24, wherein said tag is a radio-frequency identification ("RFID") tag.

30. (previously presented) The prescription order tracking system of claim 9, where said tag is a radio-frequency identification ("RFID") tag.

31. (previously presented) A prescription order storage and retrieval device having:

a computer system having a database therein and an output device for displaying information;

an identification tag having a unique tag identifier, said tag operably secured to the prescription order of a customer, the customer having a customer identifier;

a storage area having a plurality of individually identified storage areas therein,

each individually identified storage area having:
a unique visual identifier; and
a tag reader operably secured within the storage area and in communication with the computer system for automatically detecting the presence of the tag within the storage area and determining the unique identifier associated with the identification tag when the identification tag is placed within the storage area;
wherein the database includes customer identification information and the computer system correlates the unique tag identifier, the customer identifier and unique visual identifier thereby allowing easy location and retrieval of the customer's prescription order from the storage area.

b1 32. (previously presented) The prescription order storage and retrieval device of claim 31, wherein said identification tag is a radio-frequency identification ("RFID") tag.

33. (previously presented) The prescription order storage and retrieval device of claim 32, wherein said tag reader is an RFID reader.

34. (previously presented) The prescription order storage and retrieval device of claim 31, wherein said tag reader automatically detects the removal of an identification tag from the storage area.

35. (previously presented) The prescription order storage and retrieval device of claim 31, wherein said unique visual identifier is not related to information within the customer identifier.

36. (previously presented) The prescription order and storage and retrieval device of claim 35, wherein said unique visual identifier is numeric.

37. (previously presented) The prescription order and storage and retrieval device of claim 31, wherein said identification tag is detachably secured to said prescription order.

38. (previously presented) The prescription order and storage and retrieval device of claim 31, wherein said identification tag is rigidly secured to said prescription order.

39. (previously presented) The prescription order and storage and retrieval device of claim 31, wherein said identification tag is secured to a carrier for receiving the prescription order therein.

40. (previously presented) The prescription order and storage and retrieval device of claim 31, wherein each tag reader is in electrical communication with a switching device, and said switching device periodically connects and disconnects said tag reader to a computer system.

41. (previously presented) The prescription order and storage and retrieval device of claim 40, wherein each tag reader is an antenna, and said computer system includes a common scanner wherein the area adjacent to an antenna is scanned for the presence of said identification tag when said switching device electrically connects said antenna to said computer system.

42. (previously presented) The prescription order and storage and retrieval device of claim 31, wherein said storage area is a pharmacy.

43. (previously presented) The prescription order and storage and retrieval device of claim 42, wherein said pharmacy is a retail pharmacy.

44. (previously presented) A method for ensuring that a pharmacy worker distributes the correct prescription order to a customer of the pharmacy, the pharmacy having a storage portion with a plurality of individually identified storage areas therein, each individually identified storage area having a unique visual identifier and a tag reader operably secured thereto, the tag reader in communication with a computer system; said method comprising:

receiving a prescription order at a first location spaced apart from the storage area within the pharmacy;

operably securing a remote tag to the prescription order, the remote tag having a unique tag identifier readable when placed in proximity to each tag reader within the storage portion;

the computer system associating the remote tag with customer information associated with the prescription order;

filling the prescription order defining a filled prescription order;

placing the filled prescription order and the remote tag into one individually identified storage area of the plurality of individually identified storage areas without instructions from the computer system as to which individually identified storage area the filled prescription order and the remote tag are to be placed thereby defining a pharmacy worker selected storage area and placing the tag in proximity to the tag reader operably secured to the pharmacy worker selected storage area;

the tag reader within the pharmacy worker selected storage area detecting the unique tag identifier of the tag;

providing the unique tag identifier and the storage area identifier for the pharmacy worker selected storage area to the computer system;

the computer system correlating the customer information, unique tag identifier, and storage area identifier;

retrieving the customer information from the computer system to determine the storage area identifier associated with the pharmacy worker selected storage area in which the customer's filled prescription order is located; and,

retrieving the filled prescription order from the identified pharmacy worker selected storage area of the storage portion.

45. (previously presented) The method of claim 44, wherein said tag is a radio-frequency identification ("RFID") tag and said tag readers are RFID readers.

46. (previously presented) The method of claim 44, wherein said storage area identifier is not related to information contained within the customer information.

47. (previously presented) The method of claim 44, wherein said storage area identifier is numeric.

48. (previously presented) The method of claim 44, further including:
detecting the removal of the tag from the pharmacy worker selected storage area by the tag reader operably secured to the pharmacy worker selected storage area.

49. (previously presented) The method of claim 48, further including:
monitoring the time the tag remains within the pharmacy worker selected storage area by the computer system.

50. (previously presented) The method of claim 44, further including placing a second filled prescription order with a second unique remote tag operably secured thereto within the pharmacy worker selected storage area such that the filled prescription order and the second filled prescription order concurrently occupy the same pharmacy worker selected storage area, and wherein the computer system associates customer identifying information for the second filled prescription, the second prescription order and the storage identifier.

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51. (previously presented) The method of claim 50, wherein the computer system detects the removal of the prescription order from the pharmacy selected storage area during the retrieving the prescription order step, and detects the continued presence of the second prescription order within the pharmacy selected storage area during the retrieving the prescription order step.

52. (new) A method for ensuring that a pharmacy worker distributes the correct prescription order to a customer of the pharmacy, said method comprising:

receiving a prescription order at a first location;

operably securing a remote tag to the prescription order, the remote tag having a unique tag identifier readable by a computer system when placed in proximity to a tag reader;

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the computer system associating the remote tag with patient information associated with the prescription order;

filling the prescription order defining a filled prescription order;

placing the filled prescription order and the remote tag into a storage area to await customer pick-up;

upon the customer seeking to pick-up the patient's filled prescription order, determining the identity of the patient associated with the filled prescription order sought by the customer;

updating the computer system with the identity of the patient whose filled prescription is being sought by the customer;

locating the patient's filled prescription within the storage area;

upon removal of the filled prescription from the storage area, the computer system detecting the unique identifier associated with the tag secured to the patient's

filled prescription order;

the computer system comparing the identity of the patient whose filled prescription is being sought by the customer with the patient information associated with the unique tag identifier to verify that the correct prescription order has been removed from the storage area; and,

the computer system alerting a pharmacy worker if the identity of the patient whose filled prescription being sought does not correspond with the patient information associated with the filled prescription removed from the storage area.

53. (new) The method of claim 52, wherein said tag is a radio-frequency identification ("RFID") tag and said tag reader is an RFID reader.

54. (new) The method of claim 52, wherein said tag is a bar code and said tag reader is a bar code reader.

55. (new) The method of claim 52, wherein said storage area includes a visual identifier thereon and said visual identifier is not related to information contained within the customer information.

56. (new) The method of claim 55, wherein said storage area identifier is numeric.

57. (new) A method for locating within a pharmacy the correct prescription order for a particular customer, said method including the following steps:

- receiving a prescription order for the particular customer;
- tagging the prescription order with a remote tag that stays with the prescription order, the remote tag having a unique identifier that is readable by a tag reader operably connected to a computer system;
- associating the unique identifier with customer information associated with the particular customer;
- physically moving the prescription order from a first location within the pharmacy to a second location within the pharmacy;
- detecting the presence of the prescription order at the second location by a tag reader sensing the remote tag attached to the prescription order when said remote tag is in the proximity of said second location;

the computer system recording the location of the prescription order at said second location; and,

the computer system correlating the detected unique identifier with the identification information of the customer thereby verifying that the correct prescription order has been moved to said second location.

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58. (new) The method for locating within a pharmacy the correct prescription order for a particular customer of step 57, wherein said second location is a storage area for storing filled prescription orders therein, said storage area having a plurality of storage compartments therein, each said storage area having a unique identifier and a tag reader therein.

59. (new) The method for locating within a pharmacy the correct prescription order for a particular customer of claim 58, wherein said moving the prescription order from a first location to a second location step further includes:

a pharmacy worker selecting a particular storage compartment among the plurality of storage compartments in which to place the prescription order without instructions from the computer system as to which storage compartment to select.

60. (new) The method for locating within a pharmacy the correct prescription order for a particular customer of claim 57, wherein said remote tag is a radio frequency identification tag.

61. (new) The method of claim 57, wherein said remote tag is a bar code and said tag reader is a bar code reader.